From the Author

SLAVERY,

A POEM.

SLAYER

A POEM

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SLAVERY,

A POEM.

840. l. 14
8

BY

HANNAH MORE.

K.

O great design!
Ye Sons of Mercy! O complete your work;
Wrench from Oppression's hand the iron rod,
And bid the cruel feel the pains they give.

THOMPSON'S LIBERTY.

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M.DCC.LXXXVIII.

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A POEM.

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M.DCC.LXXXVIII.

SLAVERY,

A POEM.

IF Heaven has into being deign'd to call
Thy light, O LIBERTY! to ſhine on all;
Bright intellectual Sun! why does thy ray
To earth diſtribute only partial day?
Since no reſiſting cauſe from ſpirit flows
Thy penetrating eſſence to oppoſe;
No obſtacles by Nature's hand impreſt,
Thy ſubtle and ethereal beams arreſt;
Nor motion's laws can ſpeed thy active courſe,
Nor ſtrong repulſion's pow'rs obſtruct thy force;
Since there is no convexity in MIND,
Why are thy genial beams to parts confin'd?

While the chill North with thy bright ray is bleſt,
Why ſhould fell darkneſs half the South inveſt?
Was it decreed, fair Freedom! at thy birth,
That thou ſhou'd'ſt ne'er irradiate *all* the earth?
While Britain baſks in thy full blaze of light,
Why lies ſad Afric quench'd in total night?
Thee only, ſober Goddeſs! I atteſt,
In ſmiles chaſtis'd, and decent graces dreſt.
Not that unlicens'd monſter of the crowd,
Whoſe roar terrific burſts in peals ſo loud,
Deaf'ning the ear of Peace: fierce Faction's tool;
Of raſh Sedition born, and mad Miſrule;
Whoſe ſtubborn mouth, rejecting Reaſon's rein,
No ſtrength can govern, and no ſkill reſtrain;
Whoſe magic cries the frantic vulgar draw
To ſpurn at Order, and to outrage Law;

To tread on grave Authority and Pow'r,
And ſhake the work of ages in an hour:
Convuls'd her voice, and peſtilent her breath,
She raves of mercy, while ſhe deals out death:
Each blaſt is fate; ſhe darts from either hand
Red conflagration o'er th' aſtoniſh'd land;
Clamouring for peace, ſhe rends the air with noiſe,
And to reform a part, the whole deſtroys.

O, plaintive Southerne! * whoſe impaſſion'd ſtrain
So oft has wak'd my languid Muſe in vain!
Now, when congenial themes her cares engage,
She burns to emulate thy glowing page;
Her failing efforts mock her fond deſires,
She ſhares thy feelings, not partakes thy fires.
Strange pow'r of ſong! the ſtrain that warms the heart
Seems the ſame inſpiration to impart;

Touch'd

* Author of the Tragedy of Oronoko.

Touch'd by the kindling energy alone,
We think the flame which melts us is our own;
Deceiv'd, for genius we miſtake delight,
Charm'd as we read, we fancy we can write.

Tho' not to me, ſweet Bard, thy pow'rs belong,
Fair Truth, a hallow'd guide, inſpires my ſong.
Here Art wou'd weave her gayeſt flow'rs in vain,
For Truth the bright invention wou'd diſdain.
For no fictitious ills theſe numbers flow,
But living anguiſh, and ſubſtantial woe;
No individual griefs my boſom melt,
For millions feel what Oronoko felt:
Fir'd by no ſingle wrongs, the countleſs hoſt
I mourn, by rapine dragg'd from Afric's coaſt.

Periſh th' illiberal thought which wou'd debaſe
The native genius of the ſable race!

Periſh

Periſh the proud philoſophy, which ſought
To rob them of the pow'rs of equal thought!
Does then th' immortal principle within
Change with the caſual colour of a ſkin?
Does matter govern ſpirit? or is mind
Degraded by the form to which 'tis join'd?
No: they have heads to think, and hearts to feel,
And ſouls to act, with firm, tho' erring zeal;
For they have keen affections, kind deſires,
Love ſtrong as death, and active patriot fires;
All the rude energy, the fervid flame,
Of high-ſoul'd paſſion, and ingenuous ſhame:
Strong, but luxuriant virtues boldly ſhoot
From the wild vigour of a ſavage root.
Nor weak their ſenſe of honour's proud control,
For pride is virtue in a Pagan ſoul;

A ſenſe of worth, a conſcience of deſert,
A high, unbroken haughtineſs of heart;
That ſelf-ſame ſtuff which erſt proud empires ſway'd,
Of which the conquerors of the world were made.
Capricious fate of man! that very pride
In Afric ſcourg'd, in Rome was deify'd.

No Muſe, O *Qua-ſhi! ſhall thy deeds relate,
No ſtatue ſnatch thee from oblivious fate!

For

* It is a point of honour among negroes of a high ſpirit to die rather than to ſuffer their gloſſy ſkin to bear the mark of the whip. Qua-ſhi had ſomehow offended his maſter, a young planter with whom he had been bred up in the endearing intimacy of a play-fellow. His ſervices had been faithful; his attachment affectionate. The maſter reſolved to puniſh him, and purſued him for that purpoſe. In trying to eſcape Qua-ſhi ſtumbled and fell; the maſter fell upon him: they wreſtled long with doubtful victory; at length Qua-ſhi got uppermoſt, and, being firmly ſeated on his maſter's breaſt, he ſecured his legs with one hand, and with the other drew a ſharp knife; then ſaid, "Maſter, I "have been bred up with you from a child; I have loved you as myſelf: in

"return,

For thou waſt born where never gentle Muſe
On Valour's grave the flow'rs of Genius ſtrews;
And thou waſt born where no recording page
Plucks the fair deed from Time's devouring rage.
Had Fortune plac'd thee on ſome happier coaſt,
Where poliſh'd ſouls heroic virtue boaſt,
To thee, who ſought'ſt a voluntary grave,
Th' uninjur'd honours of thy name to ſave,
Whoſe generous arm thy barbarous Maſter ſpar'd,
Altars had ſmok'd, and temples had been rear'd.
Whene'er to Afric's ſhores I turn my eyes,
Horrors of deepeſt, deadlieſt guilt ariſe;

" return, you have condemned me to a puniſhment of which I muſt ever have " borne the marks: thus only I can avoid them;" ſo ſaying, he drew the knife with all his ſtrength acroſs his own throat, and fell down dead, without a groan, on his maſter's body.

Ramſay's Eſſay on the Treatment of African Slaves.

I ſee,

I ſee, by more than Fancy's mirror ſhewn,
The burning village, and the blazing town:
See the dire victim torn from ſocial life,
The ſhrieking babe, the agonizing wife!
She, wretch forlorn! is dragg'd by hoſtile hands,
To diſtant tyrants ſold, in diſtant lands!
Tranſmitted miſeries, and ſucceſſive chains,
The ſole ſad heritage her child obtains!
Ev'n this laſt wretched boon their foes deny,
To weep together, or together die.
By felon hands, by one relentleſs ſtroke,
See the fond links of feeling Nature broke!
The fibres twiſting round a parent's heart,
Torn from their graſp, and bleeding as they part.
Hold, murderers, hold! nor aggravate diſtreſs;
Reſpect the paſſions you yourſelves poſſeſs;

Ev'n you, of ruffian heart, and ruthleſs hand,
Love your own offspring, love your native land.
Ah! leave them holy Freedom's cheering ſmile,
The heav'n-taught fondneſs for the parent ſoil;
Revere affections mingled with our frame,
In every nature, every clime the ſame;
In all, theſe feelings equal ſway maintain;
In all the love of HOME and FREEDOM reign:
And Tempe's vale, and parch'd Angola's ſand,
One equal fondneſs of their ſons command.
Th' unconquer'd Savage laughs at pain and toil,
Baſking in Freedom's beams which gild his native ſoil.
Does thirſt of empire, does deſire of fame,
(For theſe are ſpecious crimes) our rage inflame?
No: ſordid luſt of gold their fate controls,
The baſeſt appetite of baſeſt ſouls;

Gold, better gain'd, by what their ripening ſky,
Their fertile fields, their arts * and mines ſupply.
What wrongs, what injuries does Oppreſſion plead
To ſmooth the horror of th' unnatural deed?
What ſtrange offence, what aggravated ſin?
They ſtand convicted—of a darker ſkin!
Barbarians, hold! th' opprobrious commerce ſpare,
Reſpect *his* ſacred image which they bear:
Tho' dark and ſavage, ignorant and blind,
They claim the common privilege of kind;
Let Malice ſtrip them of each other plea,
They ſtill are men, and men ſhou'd ſtill be free.
Inſulted Reaſon, loaths th' inverted trade—
Dire change! the agent is the purchaſe made!

* Beſides many valuable productions of the ſoil, cloths and carpets of exquiſite manufacture are brought from the coaſt of Guinea.

Perplex'd,

Perplex'd, the baffled Muſe involves the tale;
Nature confounded, well may language fail!
The outrag'd Goddeſs with abhorrent eyes
Sees MAN the traffic, SOULS the merchandize!

Plead not, in reaſon's palpable abuſe,
Their ſenſe of * feeling callous and obtuſe:
From heads to hearts lies Nature's plain appeal,
Tho' few can reaſon, all mankind can feel.
Tho' wit may boaſt a livelier dread of ſhame,
A loftier ſenſe of wrong refinement claim;
Tho' poliſh'd manners may freſh wants invent,
And nice diſtinctions nicer ſouls torment;
Tho' theſe on finer ſpirits heavier fall,
Yet natural evils are the ſame to all.

* Nothing is more frequent than this cruel and ſtupid argument, that they do not *feel* the miſeries inflicted on them as Europeans would do.

Tho' wounds there are which reaſon's force may heal,
There needs no logic ſure to make us feel.
The nerve, howe'er untutor'd, can ſuſtain
A ſharp, unutterable ſenſe of pain;
As exquiſitely faſhion'd in a ſlave,
As where unequal fate a ſceptre gave.
Senſe is as keen where Congo's ſons preſide,
As where proud Tiber rolls his claſſic tide.
Rhetoric or verſe may point the feeling line,
They do not whet ſenſation, but define.
Did ever ſlave leſs feel the galling chain,
When Zeno prov'd there was no ill in pain?
Their miſeries philoſophic quirks deride,
Slaves groan in pangs diſown'd by Stoic pride.

When the fierce Sun darts vertical his beams,
And thirſt and hunger mix their wild extremes;

When

When the ſharp iron * wounds his inmoſt ſoul,
And his ſtrain'd eyes in burning anguiſh roll;
Will the parch'd negro find, ere he expire,
No pain in hunger, and no heat in fire?

For him, when fate his tortur'd frame deſtroys,
What hope of preſent fame, or future joys?
For *this*, have heroes ſhorten'd nature's date;
For *that*, have martyrs gladly met their fate;
But him, forlorn, no hero's pride ſuſtains,
No martyr's bliſsful viſions ſooth his pains;
Sullen, he mingles with his kindred duſt,
For he has learn'd to dread the Chriſtian's truſt;

* This is not ſaid figuratively. The writer of theſe lines has ſeen a complete ſet of chains, fitted to every ſeparate limb of theſe unhappy, innocent men; together with inſtruments for wrenching open the jaws, contrived with ſuch ingenious cruelty as would ſhock the humanity of an inquiſitor.

To him what mercy can that Pow'r diſplay,
Whoſe ſervants murder, and whoſe ſons betray?
Savage! thy venial error I deplore,
They are *not* Chriſtians who infeſt thy ſhore.

O thou ſad ſpirit, whoſe preposterous yoke
The great deliverer Death, at length, has broke!
Releas'd from miſery, and eſcap'd from care,
Go, meet that mercy man denay'd thee here.
In thy dark home, ſure refuge of th' oppreſs'd,
The wicked vex not, and the weary reſt.
And, if ſome notions, vague and undefin'd,
Of future terrors have aſſail'd thy mind;
If ſuch thy maſters have preſum'd to teach,
As terrors only they are prone to preach;
(For ſhou'd they paint eternal Mercy's reign,
Where were th' oppreſſor's rod, the captive's chain?)

If, then, thy troubled ſoul has learn'd to dread
The dark unknown thy trembling footſteps tread;
On HIM, who made thee what thou art, depend;
HE, who withholds the means, accepts the end.
Not *thine* the reckoning dire of LIGHT abus'd,
KNOWLEDGE diſgrac'd, and LIBERTY miſus'd;
On *thee* no awful judge incens'd ſhall ſit
For parts perverted, and diſhonour'd wit.
Where ignorance will be found the fureſt plea,
How many learn'd and wiſe ſhall envy *thee*!

And thou, WHITE SAVAGE! whether luſt of gold,
Or luſt of conqueſt, rule thee uncontrol'd!
Hero, or robber!—by whatever name
Thou plead thy impious claim to wealth or fame;
Whether inferior miſchiefs be thy boaſt,
A petty tyrant rifling Gambia's coaſt:

Or bolder carnage track thy crimſon way,
Kings diſpoſſeſs'd, and Provinces thy prey;
Panting to tame wide earth's remoteſt bound;
All Cortez murder'd, all Columbus found;
O'er plunder'd realms to reign, deteſted Lord,
Make millions wretched, and thyſelf abhorr'd;——
In Reaſon's eye, in Wiſdom's fair account,
Your ſum of glory boaſts a like amount;
The means may differ, but the end's the ſame;
Conqueſt is pillage with a nobler name.
Who makes the ſum of human bleſſings leſs,
Or ſinks the ſtock of general happineſs,
No ſolid fame ſhall grace, no true renown,——
His life ſhall blazon, or his memory crown.
Had thoſe advent'rous ſpirits who explore
Thro' ocean's trackleſs waſtes, the far-ſought ſhore;

Whether of wealth inſatiate, or of pow'r,
Conquerors who waſte, or ruffians who devour:
Had theſe poſſeſs'd, O Cook! thy gentle mind,
Thy love of arts, thy love of humankind;
Had theſe purſued thy mild and liberal plan,
Discoverers had not been a curſe to man!
Then, bleſs'd Philanthropy! thy ſocial hands
Had link'd diſſever'd worlds in brothers bands;
Careleſs, if colour, or if clime divide;
Then, lov'd, and loving, man had liv'd, and died.

The pureſt wreaths which hang on glory's ſhrine,
For empires founded, peaceful Penn! are thine;
No blood-ſtain'd laurels crown'd thy virtuous toil,
No ſlaughter'd natives drench'd thy fair-earn'd ſoil.
Still thy meek ſpirit in thy * flock ſurvives,
Conſiſtent ſtill, *their* doctrines rule their lives;

* The Quakers have emancipated all their ſlaves throughout America.

Thy followers only have effac'd the ſhame
Inſcrib'd by SLAVERY on the Chriſtian name.
Shall Britain, where the ſoul of Freedom reigns,
Forge chains for others ſhe herſelf diſdains?
Forbid it, Heaven! O let the nations know
The liberty ſhe loves ſhe will beſtow;
Not to herſelf the glorious gift confin'd,
She ſpreads the bleſſing wide as humankind;
And, ſcorning narrow views of time and place,
Bids all be free in earth's extended ſpace.
What page of human annals can record
A deed ſo bright as human rights reſtor'd?
O may that god-like deed, that ſhining page,
Redeem OUR fame, and conſecrate OUR age!
And ſee, the cherub Mercy from above,
Deſcending ſoftly, quits the ſphere of love!

On

On feeling hearts ſhe ſheds celeſtial dew,
And breathes her ſpirit o'er th' enlighten'd few;
From ſoul to ſoul the ſpreading influence ſteals,
Till every breaſt the ſoft contagion feels.
She bears, exulting, to the burning ſhore
The lovelieſt office Angel ever bore;
To vindicate the pow'r in Heaven ador'd,
To ſtill the clank of chains, and ſheathe the ſword;
To cheer the mourner, and with ſoothing hands
From burſting hearts unbind th' Oppreſſor's bands;
To raiſe the luſtre of the Chriſtian name,
And clear the fouleſt blot that dims its fame.

As the mild Spirit hovers o'er the coaſt,
A freſher hue the wither'd landſcapes boaſt;
Her healing ſmiles the ruin'd ſcenes repair,
And blaſted Nature wears a joyous air.

She ſpreads her bleſt commiſſion from above,
Stamp'd with the ſacred characters of love;
She tears the banner ſtain'd with blood and tears,
And, LIBERTY! thy ſhining ſtandard rears!
As the bright enſign's glory ſhe diſplays,
See pale OPPRESSION faints beneath the blaze!
The giant dies! no more his frown appals,
The chain untouch'd, drops off; the fetter falls.
Aſtoniſh'd echo tells the vocal ſhore,
Oppreſſion's fall'n, and Slavery is no more!
The duſky myriads crowd the ſultry plain,
And hail that mercy long invok'd in vain.
Victorious Pow'r! ſhe burſts their two-fold bands,
And FAITH and FREEDOM ſpring from Mercy's hands.

FINIS.